A

NARRATIVE

OF THE

EXTRAORDINARY CASE

OF

GEORGE LUKINS,

(OF YATTON, SOMERSETSHIRE.)

WHO WAS POSSESSED OF EVIL SPIRITS, FOR

NEAR EIGHTEEN YEARS.

ALSO

AN ACCOUNT

OF HIS

REMARKABLE DELIVERANCE,

IN THE VESTRY-ROOM OF TEMPLE CHURCH, IN THE CITY OF BRISTOL, EXTRACTED FROM THE MANUSCRIPTS OF SEVERAL PERSONS WHO ATTENDED.

To which is prefixed,

A LETTER

FROM THE REV. W. R. W

(BRISTOL, PRINTED.)

PHILADELPHIA:

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TO THE

READER.

AS several erroneous accounts are now in circulation, it was thought highly necessary that a plain, and true state of the extraordinary facts here related, should be laid before the public; the whole of which is taken from the papers of several respectable people of known veracity, who were eye-witnesses, and are ready (if necessary) to confirm it in the most solemn manner. If any person, after reading this account, ascribes it to enthusiasm, delusion, *or a* juggling trick, *we refer them to part of the eighth and seventeenth chapters of St. Mathew; and to the first, fifth, and ninth verses of the sixteenth chapter of St. Mark, aud then ask them, if it is not equally as possible for such things to be permitted now*

as then, seeing the hand of the LORD *is not shortened, nor his power diminished? If they will not believe that such events are now permitted, neither will they acknowledge the facts in the days of our* Saviour; *thus** "*If they* "*hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither* "*will they be persuaded though one rose from* "*the dead.*"

* Luke xvi. 31.

BRISTOL, JUNE 25, 1788

THE

FOLLOWING LETTER

WAS WRITTEN BY A CLERGYMAN OF UNDOUBTED VERACITY, AND COPIED FROM THE BATH CHRONICLE INTO THE

BRISTOL GAZETTE.

TO THE PRINTER

OF THE

BRISTOL GAZETTE.

SIR,

WHEN you can spare room in your Gazette, I think you will not be able to present your readers with an account so extraordinary and surprizing, as the following. It is the most singular case of perverted reason, and bodily suffering that I ever heard of; nor have the most learned and ingenious persons been able to solve the phænomenon, much less to administer relief to the afflicted object. You may depend on the authenticity of every part of the relation; a member of my family having been near

thirty years minister of the place where the person resides, many of my friends still inhabiting it, and myself having been frequently a witness to the facts I shall mention.

About eighteen years ago the unfortunate subject of this Epistle, going about the neighbourhood with other young fellows, acting Christmas plays or mummeries, suddenly fell down senseless, and was with great difficulty recovered. When he came to himself, the account he gave was, that he seemed at the moment of his fall to have received a violent blow from the hand of some person, who, as he thought, was allowed thus to punish him for acting a part in the play. From that moment he has been subject, at uncertain and different periods, to fits of a most singular and dreadful nature. The first symptom is a powerful agitation of the right hand, to which succeed terrible distortions of the countenance. The influence of the fit has then commenced. He declares, in a roaring voice, that he is the devil, who with many horrid execrations

summons about him certain persons devoted to his will, and commands them to torture this unhappy patient with all the diabolical means in their power. The supposed Demon then directs his servants to sing. Accordingly the patient sings in a different voice a jovial hunting song, which, having received the approbation of the Foul Fiend, is succeeded by a song in a female voice, very delicately expressed; and this is followed, at the particular injunction of the Demon, by a pastoral song in the form of a dialogue, sung by, and in the real character of the patient himself. After a pause, and more violent distortions, he again personates the Demon, and sings in a hoarse, frightful voice, another hunting song. But in all these songs, whenever any expression of goodness, benevolence, or innocence occurs in the original, it is regularly changed to another of its opposite meaning; neither can the patient bear to hear any good words whatever, nor any expression relating to the church, during the influence of his fit, but is exasperated by them into the most shocking degree of blasphemy and outrage. Nei-

ther can he speak or write any expressions of this tendency, whilst the subsequent weakness of his fits is upon him; but is driven to madness by their mention. Having performed the songs, he continues to personate the Demon, and derides the attempts which the patient has been making to get out of his power; that he will persecute and torment him more and more to the end of his life; and that all the efforts of parsons and physicians shall prove fruitless. An inverted Te Deum is then sung in the alternate voices of a man and a woman, who with much profaneness thank the Demon for having given them the power over the patient, which they will continue as long as he lives. The Demon then concludes the ceremony, by declaring his unalterable resolution to punish him for ever; and after breaking fiercely, and interspersing many assertions of his own diabolical dignity, the fit subsides into the same strong agitation of the hand that introduced it, and the patient recovers from its influence, utterly weakened and exhausted. At certain periods of the fit, he is so violent that an assistant is always obliged to be

at hand to restrain him from committing some injury on himself; though to the spectators he is perfectly harmless. He understands all that is said and done during his fits, and will even reply sometimes to questions asked him. He is under the influence of these paroxism generally near an hour: during which time his eyes are fast closed. Sometimes he fancies himself changed into the form of an animal; when he assumes all the motions and sounds that are peculiar to it. From the execrations he utters, it may be presumed that he is or was of an abandoned and profligate character, but the reverse is the truth; he was ever of a remarkably innocent, and inoffensive disposition. Every method that the various persons who have come to see him have suggested, every effort of some very ingenious gentlemen of the faculty who applied their serious attention to his case, has been long ago and recently exerted without success; and some years ago he was sent to St. George's Hospital, where he remained about twenty weeks, and was pronounced incurable. Of late, he has every day at least three, and

sometimes nine of these fits, which have reduced him to great weakness, and almost to despair; for he cannot hear any virtuous or religious expression used without pain and horror. The emaciated and exhausted figure that he represents; the number of years that he has been subject to this malady, and the prospect of want and distress that lies before him, through being thus disabled from following his business; all preclude the suspicion of imposture. His life is become a series of intense pain and anxiety.

Should any of your readers question the authenticity of this relation, or conceive themselves able to administer relief, or even mitigation, to this afflicted object, you know your correspondent, and have my free consent to refer them to me.

I remain, your very humble servant,

W. R. W.

Wrington, June 5, 1788.

A

NARRATIVE, &c.

A SHORT ACCOUNT OF GEORGE LUKINS AFTER HIS COMING TO BRISTOL, AND PRIOR TO HIS HAPPY DELIVERANCE.

SEVERAL persons who had been acquainted with George Lukins's unhappy situation for many years, had heard him repeatedly say, that he was possessed of seven Devils, and if seven Ministers could be got to pray with him, in faith, they would be cast out. But this declaration being treated as a visionary matter, he remained in his former state, notwithstanding every medical means were made use of for his cure. However, a person who felt much for his deplorable case, had him brought to Bristol on Saturday the 7th of June, to see if any thing could be done for him.

Such an extraordinary case soon became the topic of the day, and many religious persons of different denominations, reading of the account in the papers, were induced

to visit him, for several days prior to his deliverance; all of whom have agreed, that the account given in the before-mentioned papers was a relation of facts.....His fits generally came on about seven o'clock in the morning, at eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and at seven in the evening; but frequently he had seven fits of a day.

A person who went to see him, writes as follows:

" Wednesday the 11th of June, about a quarter before seven in the evening, I went to see GEORGE LUKINS, of whom it was reported, upon respectable authority, that he was possessed by the devil.

" After I had been with him about twenty minutes, his fits commenced by a violent convulsion of the nervous system, beginning with a powerful agitation of the right hand, which soon extended over the whole body. This agitation was attended with such shocking distortions of the countenance that is impossible for language to describe. After he had been in this situation about a quarter of an hour, he made a deep roar, in a voice that made the room shake. Immediately after the roar, the Demon (as

if enraged) violently exclaimed, " D—n thy soul to hell." After repeating this execration several times, the fiend added, " Thou fool, thou thoughtest by coming to Bristol to have avoided my power and authority. Ah! ah! ah! thou fool! dost thou not know that I have the supreme command over thee, and that it is in vain for thee to get out of my power? I tell thee, fool, 'tis all in vain; for I say and swear by my infernal den of hell, that I will torment thee ten thousand times worse than ever." A short pause now ensued, during which time the patient's face was again more violently distorted. Soon after, several distinct voices, in a feminine tone, repeated nearly the same as the Demon had before said, but in a far more jeering and taunting manner, which they ended by asserting, with the most shocking execrations, That they were* determined, by the infernal den of hell, to torment him ten thousand times worse than ever, even to the end of his life. This was instantly succeeded by a kind of singing, as if they were

* Here the word was changed from the singular to the plural.

triumphing in that they had power over the unhappy object. This singing was without any particular words, and in which the loud and feminine voices alternately took part. A second pause now took place, which lasted about two or three minutes, when the Demon, in a hoarse voice, cried out, "I command you, my servants, to attend!" Immediately after (as if they were at hand) he said, "Now you are here, we will have a dance and a song." Accordingly a soft female voice sung a hunting song, which was clearly and prettily expressed. When this was finished, another song was sung in a kind of dialogue; the loud and soft voices sang their respective parts, and the man's legs and arms were in motion all the time. When the Demon had expressed his satisfaction at their singing, he said, "Now you have had your dance and song, I will sing a song myself. You shall hear your master. You shall hear the Devil sing for once." Upon which he sang a hunting song; at the conclusion the man was so violently agitated, that it was with great difficulty two strong men could hold him from injuring

himself. In this part of the fit the Demon began railing and blaspheming most hideously, crying out, " Ah! ah! ah! man; we told thee it was all in vain for thee to strive against my power. What good did the two fellows that thou hadst with thee last night do; and the black-coated fellows thou hadst with thee this morning, and the fellow from Kingswood? Why did they not come to-night, fool? No, no. They thought it their best way not to come; for if they had, I would have shown them a fine trick. I would let them see that I was their master." Here the Demon began singing, when at the same time a young Clergyman came into the room. This singing lasted a few minutes, after which the fiend seemed most violently enraged. The man's body being turned towards the minister, the voice three times repeated, " D—n thy soul to hell;" and then addressing itself to the demoniac, exclaimed, " Thou fool! What, dost think to bring an unbelieving black-coated fellow to withstand my power and authority? I tell thee, fool! it is all in vain. It is of no use for them to come here to prate

If they come to see me....I am the devil. If that is all they come for, it is well." The evil spirit then began again to upbraid him for his folly, saying, "That all his endeavours were in vain," and added, "He was determined to exert his supreme authority over him to the latest period of his life." He then reverted to what he had said before concerning the persons who were with him the preceding night and morning, intimating that they were afraid to come again; but added, in a jeering tone, "Thou shalt have a fine parcel of the black-coated fellows with thee to-morrow; and I will put thee on thy legs, and make thee look like something among them."* Another interval of his fit then took place for a few minutes, at the end of which a female voice chaunted out, "We praise thee, we magnify thee, and own thee to be our supreme head, and....† Governor, O Devil! We acknowledge thy power, and may it be extended from one end of the

* It is worthy of notice, that the next day five Ministers met, and while one of them was giving out a hymn, the demoniac, who is but a small thin man, jumped up out of his chair (though held by two strong men) and attempted to snatch the hymn-book out of the minister's hand. He stood on his legs for a considerable time, and it was with great difficulty they placed him in his chair again.

† Here was a short pause.

earth to the other, O Devil! We give thanks unto thee, in that thou hast given us power over this man to torment him, and may that power be increased unto us, and extended to the end of his life, O Devil!" This chaunting was repeated distinctly by six different voices, while the seventh, or hoarse voice, (a circumstance which I particularly noticed) remained silent to receive (as it were) their praises. When this chaunting was over, the man was again most violently tortured; the Devil still boasting of his power, and threatening that when he had got us into his infernal den of hell, we should all bow down to him* and acknowledge him to be our supreme governor....He then blasphemed for some time, and departed for the present.

"The above is a true and faithful account of what I both heard and saw, and to which I am ready to give my most solemn affirmation.

J.....B....."

Thursday the 12th, the day before his deliverance, his fits grew more violent and longer. He was seized in the morning, about

* Here the tormented man bowed his head between his legs, almost to the ground.

eleven o'clock. His right hand first began to shake*, like a convulsive motion: then the right leg was affected in the same manner; and in a few minutes his whole body was agitated and convulsed to an uncommon degree. He then waved his hands one toward the other with a quick involuntary motion, his mouth and eyes distorted in such a dreadful manner that it was impossible for any one to do, unless aided by a supernatural power. After a few minutes continuing in this state, he cried, in a horrible voice, "I am the Devil: I have power over all men: I am the supreme—† Governor." He then called on his inferior devils to come up, and do their office, and to sing the hunting song. Afterwards he broke out with bitter oaths, curses, and imprecations, and exclaimed, "I will torment this fellow to his life's end." Soon after, a small female voice sung an inverted Te Deum, "We praise thee, O Devil! We acknowledge thee to be the supreme—‡ Governor! We thank thee for

* It is remarkable, that at this time all pulsation ceased in that arm, while in the other the pulse beat with uncommon rapidity, till it was affected in like manner, and then the right arm beat.

† Here was a short pause.

‡ Here was a short pause.

giving us power to torment this fellow." Immediately, with a shrill and melodious voice, he sung a hunting song, very enchanting to the ear.

Upon this one of the Ministers who attended, turned to the rest of the company, and said, Friends, what are we at? Are we come to hear the devil's songs? No, no. Let us sing to the praise and glory of God: Give out a hymn. Another of the Ministers gave out the following hymn:

" O for a thousand tongues to sing
" My dear Redeemer's name," &c.

After singing, while one of the Ministers was praying, the man, or rather the evil one in him, sang and roared all the time, and appeared in such an agony that scarcely two stout men could hold him in his chair. He then cried out, in a loud voice, " Thou fool! Thou unbeliever!.....Thou mayest pray to eternity....I will not be conquered....I am the Devil....I am supreme—Governor.....Thou mayest pray for ever and ever.....I will torment this fellow to his life's end." After this several others prayed. The first Minister then prayed again, and while he intreated God to deliver this poor man, who had

been tormented with Devils for these eighteen years, he cried out, "Thou fool! Thou unbeliever!....Thou mayest pray, thou mayest pray till midnight....I am the devil....I will not be conquered....The time is not yet come, but it is near at hand." This gave great encouragement for continuing in prayer; they had now confidence that God would soon answer their request in behalf of this poor demoniac. Soon after he was quite out of the fit, calm and serene, as if nothing had happened, and talked very rational.

For some time he was much pressed by those present to say God, Lord Jesus Christ, Lord have mercy upon me, deliver me from this temptation, but he could not say it, nor any thing of a sacred nature, but put his hands to his ears to prevent even hearing the sound. Sometimes when he was importuned to cry unto God, for mercy, he would immediately reply, "Devil, devil," and fall into strange agitations. The preceding day, as one of the Ministers entered the room, he broke out with a laughing sneer, as though he had an inveteracy against him, "Ha! ha! ha! What, are you come? Long looked for come at last?"

It is worth observing, that a person of some discernment visited him with an intention to discover any thing that bore the aspect of an imposture, but soon was convinced by the evidence he received, that the man in all his paroxysms spoke and acted by necessity. The above gentleman was particular in his inquiries, before and after the fit, whether he knew right from wrong when he was so violently agitated? He answered, "Yes." He knew what was right and wrong, likewise what he did and said; but was compelled by the Demon, who then acted upon him, in all that occurred during the fit, so that in no respect he was a free agent: even in the songs which he sang, if any word bore the resemblance of goodness or modesty, he was impelled to change the word for one more suitable to the genius of the Devil. We might insert a few of those lines for example, but we refrain, lest we should shock the delicacy of the reader.

The next day (being Friday the 13th) seven ministers* assembled together, according to a former appointment, in the vestry room of Temple church, with an intention to spend some hours in prayer for the deliverance of this unhappy man.....They began about eleven o'clock with singing an hymn proper for the occasion. In a little time the fit came on in the usual way, but his agitations, distortions, &c. grew stronger and stronger, till they became more dreadful than ever they appeared before. He was demanded by one of the ministers present, as the voice of them all, In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, "Who he was?" but no reply. He was asked a second time, but no answer. It was urg-

* The Rev. Mr. Easterbrook, Vicar of *Temple*, Messrs. J. Broadbent, J. Valton, B. Rhodes, J. Brettel, T. M'Geary, W. Hunt, with eight other serious persons.

ed again; he then grinned, and with a horrible voice exclaimed, "I am the Devil." He was then asked, Why he tormented this man? he answered, "To shew my power among men." Immediately on which he was strangely convulsed, and endeavoured to kick at a person who was near him, but was prevented by the exertions of two men, who were obliged to hold him during the time: he foamed at the mouth, his face was distorted to a degree beyond description, his body was thrown into different forms, and after some violent throws, he spake in a deep hoarse hollow voice, calling the man to an account, and upbraiding him as a fool for bringing that silly company together; said it was to no purpose, and swore "By his infernal den," that he would never quit his hold of him, but would torment him a thousand times worse for making this vain attempt.

The voice of the demoniac was then compelled to sing in his usual manner; afterwards he blasphemed, boasted of his power, and vowed eternal vengeance on the miserable object, and on those present for daring to oppose him; and commanded his "faithful and obedient servants," to appear and take their stations.

He then spake in a female voice, very expressive of scorn and derision, and demanded to know "Why the fool had brought such a company there?" and swore "By the Devil." That he would not quit his hold of him, and bid defiance to, and cursd all who should attempt to rescue the miserable object from them. He then sung, in the same female voice a kind of love-song, at the conclusion of which he was violently tortured, and repeated most horrid imprecations.

Another invisible agent came forth, assuming a diffe-

rent voice, but his manner much the same as the preceeding one. A kind of dialogue was then sung in a hoarse and soft voice alternately; at the conclusion of which, as before, the man was thrown into violent agonies, and blasphemed in a manner too dreadful to be expressed.

He then personated, and said, "I am the Devil;" and after much boasting of his power, and bidding defiance to all his opposers, sung a kind of hunting-song; at the conclusion of which he was most violently tortured, so that it was with difficulty that two strong men could hold him, though he is but a small man and very weak in constitution. Sometimes he would set up a hideous laugh, and at other times bark in a manner indescribably horrid.

After this he summoned the host of infernals to appear, and drive the company away. And while the Ministers were engaged in fervent prayer, he sung a Te Deum to the Devil, in different voices, saying, "We praise thee, O Devil! We acknowledge thee to be the supreme Governor, &c. &c.

When the noise was so great as to obstruct the company proceding in prayer, they sang together an hymn suitable to the occasion. Whilst they were in prayer, the voice which personated the Devil bid them defiance, cursing and vowing dreadful vengeance on all present.

The poor man still remained in great agonies and torture, and prayer was continued for his deliverance. A Clergyman present desired him to endeavour to speak the name of "Jesus," and several times repeated it to him; at all of which he replied "Devil." During this attempt, a small faint voice was heard, saying, "Why

don't you adjure?* On which the Clergyman commanded, In the name of Jesus, and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Evil Spirit to depart from the man! which he repeated several times, when a voice was heard to say, "Must I give up my power? and this was followed with dreadful howlings. Soon after another voice, as with astonishment, said, "Our master has deceived us."....The Clergyman still continuing to repeat the adjuration, a voice was heard to say, "Where shall we go?" and the reply was,—"To hell, thine own infernal den, and return no more to torment this man." On this the man's agitations and distortions were stronger than ever, attended with the most dreadful howling that can be conceived. But as soon as this conflict was over, he said, in his own natural voice, "Blessed Jesus!"—became quite serene, immediately praised God for his deliverance, and kneeling down said the Lord's prayer, and then sung the 67th Psalm, (as in evening Service) "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and shew us the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us. That thy ways may be known upon earth; thy saving health among all nations. Let the people praise thee, O God: yea, let all the people praise thee. He then returned his sincere thanks to the company present, and the meeting broke up a little before one o'clock, having lasted near two hours; and the man went away entirely delivered, has had no return of the disorder since, but by the blessing of God is getting strength daily.

☞ Public thanksgiving was made on Sunday the 15th, of June, in Yatton Church, by the Rev. Mr. Wild, for Lukins's happy recovery.

* This was heard in a sweet voice, supposed to be a good spirit.

FINIS.